

# Case Study: Attendance Notification

School districts nationwide are looking for reliable, cost-effective ways to increase ADA and foster student achievement in an era of restrictive budgets. Designed for seamless integration with existing information systems, the Connect-ED service enabled two leading California school districts, La Mesa-Spring Valley and Vacaville Unified, to fully automate daily and period attendance without changing procedures. The result: improved attendance and parental involvement—the #1 predictor of student achievement—with proven ROI.

### Challenge: Declining Enrollment

With more than six million students in about 9,500 schools, California's public education system is immense. Despite this, many California school districts are experiencing declining enrollment. Making improvements to Average Daily Attendance (ADA) has never been more critical.

### Solution: Connect-ED

Proactive, timely communication engages parents on a personal level and facilitates student achievement. By using service of Blackboard Connect Inc., to notify parents regarding absences, truancy and school events, districts have improved parental involvement and increased attendance. Most significantly, payments from the state to districts are attributable to such increases in ADA and have produced measurable Return On Investment (ROI).

### Result: Higher ADA, Increased Funding, Multiple Returns On Investment

**La Mesa-Spring Valley School District** quickly recouped nine times the amount it invested in the Connect-ED service. Comparing Period 1 (P1) attendance in 2005 (August to December) to 2006 P1 attendance, a 0.75% improvement was realized, leading to a \$450,000 increase of payments to the district from the state.

This does not, of course, include the many benefits gained by using the system for outreach purposes or to better address urgent situations.

Superintendent Brian Marshall described his experience this way: "I thought that the Connect-ED service would pay for itself if attendance brought the ADA up—and it did. Our figures showed us that the system paid for itself many times over. It helps us clear up absences:

kids know they can't be truant because their parents are going to receive a call."

Further north, **Vacaville Unified School District** began using the Connect-ED service for attendance calls in January 2006. Parents immediately responded to the new service with enthusiasm. According to Superintendent John Aycock, "Connect-ED has become an integral part of our outreach programs. Parents are excited to feel much more connected to the schools."

Vacaville experienced a dramatic turnaround, too. With enrollment in decline, the district turned to outreach and incentive initiatives to boost attendance, with the Connect-ED service a key component. As a result, the district increased its 2006 ADA from 91.8% to 95.08%. The district received from the state of California approximately \$714,000 per 1% increase in attendance, or \$2.7 million overall.

In the words of Superintendent Aycock, "The great thing about this technology is that it works when you need it. Connect-ED has made a huge difference in alerting parents of absences and improving overall communications with parents."

"I thought that the Connect-ED service would pay for itself if attendance brought the ADA up... The system paid for itself many times over and has become an integral part of our communications plan."

— Brian Marshall, Superintendent, La Mesa Spring Valley, CA